Always on, even at home

A guide to keeping remote teams productive
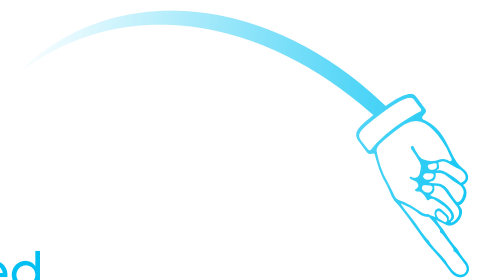
Stay Home with VONEX

On top of increased productivity, working from home boosts retention by 50%

Procter & Gamble

Thanks to the latest innovations in software development and communications technology, companies have the flexibility of allowing staff to work effectively and productively from home. There are several benefits of working from home for both employers and their employees; zero traffic, no noisy co-workers, and increased worker satisfaction to keep them on task. According to the Harvard Business Review, an average worker is willing to accept 8% less pay for the option to work from home; this indicates that workers assign a monetary value to the flexibility provided by a Work from Home policy.

So how will your staff stay connected and engaged while working remotely? Here are some simple tips on how home offices should be prepared to keep your team on task and on-call out of the office.

Firstly,
Set the scene

Equipment

If you usually work in a shared office space, and are transitioning to work remotely, ensure you have the right tools to get the job done.

Never underestimate just how well designed the average office chair is and how much we take big screens for granted. Having a suitable setup at home will create a more sustainable solution.

For short term arrangements, laptops make working from home simple and can easily be transported home or for that matter anywhere.

Just because your team is out of the office, your clients and suppliers needn't know. The right phone system will allow calls to be made and received throughout the day using the regular office line.

Handsets are programmed to plug and play, so you may be able to take your desk phone with you and continue to use all of its features.

Alternatively, softphone apps provide an excellent option for staff that not only need to work from home but often travel or attend external meetings.

Space

Your home office space should be in a tidy and quiet area. If you live with others, it's essential to find a space away from noise and distraction, perhaps a spare room with a door to separate your working space from the rest of the house. A dedicated workspace also helps create mental boundaries; if you designate an area to "go to work," where only work happens and no other activities, it will help give your day some structure.

Lighting

The correct lighting in your home office can also impact your employees' work performance, wellbeing, and engagement while working remotely. Natural light in office spaces such as windows and exposure to daylight have been shown to reduce headaches and eyestrain, as well as to improve worker satisfaction and productivity. Avoid harsh fluorescent lighting and spotlights if you can.

Setting boundaries

Put some clothes on ✓
Set your hours ✓
Take a lunch break ✓

Next, **Connect the team**

Working remotely increases productivity by 1.4 days per month

Airtasker Survey

The apps we use to keep work collaborative and flexible

Workplace
by Facebook

Most people know how to navigate Facebook so getting the team across how to use Workplace is easy. Just like Facebook, Workplace lets you chat between collegues, video conference with larger groups and make announcements on your company page.

facebook.com/workplace

Canva

Canva is a graphic design platform that allows users to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, and other visual content. Even if you have little to no graphic design skills, this platform will get your brand looking great.

canva.com

Salesforce

Investing in a Customer Relationship Management system should be a priority for all businesses to keep track of their sales pipeline and customer journey. Your database is only as valuable as what you do with it.

salesforce.com

Office 365

Conveniently store and access your team's files in the cloud, along with your email and calendar anywhere. Office 365 gives you peace of mind in knowing that your documents are safely secured and easily accessible to the verified members of your team.

office365.com

Grammarly

Grammarly is a robust spell-check tool that keeps your writing mistake-free. So rather than solely relying on your colleague to get back to you with their proofreading comments, Grammarly can step in and help out.

grammarly.com

Xero

With basic bookkeeping right through to efficient online invoicing, live bank feeds, and detailed financial reporting, it's no wonder Xero is one of the largest cloud-based accounting platforms in the world.

xero.com

Monday

A great project management tool to keep your team on task and projects on track. Super visual and easy to customise, it's a dream management tool to see project pipelines come to life.

monday.com

Finally,

Plan your policy

In addition to job satisfaction and work-life balance...

home-based employees may save $2,000 to $7,000 per year

Forbes

The 7 key areas of effective policy planning

from Michael Page Recruitment

1   Who gets to work from home?

2   Equipment requirements

3   Health and safety

4   Company security

5   Monitoring performance

6   What are your employees' motivations?

7   Wording your policy

1 Who gets to work from home?

Every employee is different, and you need to be able to recognise which of your workers will be productive working from home. People who need a strict routine to produce results may not be best suited to home working. In extenuating circumstances, weather or health emergencies, it will need to be made clear to some staff that measures are temporary.

2 Equipment Requirements

Depending on the nature of your business, you may have to provide your employees with extra technology for their homes. For example, are you going to ask them to use their own computer, or will you supply a laptop?

3 Health and Safety

Employers have different levels of responsibility for employees working from home; you might need to include language in your policy that allows you to access their home to review hazard risks.

4 Company security

Information and documentation from your organisation will be trusted to the employee outside of the company. It's not just the employee you need to think about, what about other people entering their home? How do you regain documents if the work relationship ends?

5 Monitoring performance

Many organisations use software that tracks employee input, but if this isn't suitable for your line of work, how will you ensure your employees are working to optimum levels? You should think about how often you will need contact with home workers, even if it's just by email.

6 What are your employees' motivations?

You should make it clear in your policy if you expect employees to treat their workday at home as though they were at the office. For example, they should not think of working from home as an alternative to hiring child care.

7 Wording your policy

The more detailed your policy is, the easier it will be to sort out any disagreements regarding an employee's rights.

The policy should also outline the working hours you expect from anyone working from home, which is why it's so important to be able to monitor performance. If you require regular updates, you should state whether the employee will be required to come into the office and how often.

You should discuss the language of your policy and any risk assessment procedures with your legal advisors. To get you started, we have prepared a standard agreement customisable to your business.

Use our template to plan your policy

Applicant Details

Name of staff member	
Position	
Home office address	
Home office phone	
Email	
Contact arrangements	

Working from Home arrangements

Number of days at home based worksite	Number of days at office based site
Commencement date of arrangement	/ /
End date of arrangement	/ /
Hours of work per week at home based worksite	
Specific reason for home based work	
Outline of agreed deliverables	
Date of review	/ /

Checklist

Working from home self-assessment checklist attached	Yes / No

I have read and understood the conditions set out in the Working from Home agreement procedure and indicate my acceptance of the terms of this agreement by signing below.

Staff member's signature	
Date	/ /
Approved	Yes / No
Supervisor's signature	
Date	/ /